

Dear Representative Luxenberg, Senator Moore, and members of the Housing Committee:

My name is Annie Stutzman and I am a resident of New Haven, CT.

I am testifying in support of a rent cap and in support of SB 4, with changes to better protect tenants.

Why this is important to me:

Housing instability caused by no rent stabilization takes a toll on the entire community, but especially typically disenfranchised groups. Housing instability and losing housing, most importantly during harsher weather seasons and critical events which affect the community at-large, such as pandemics, means families have even more limited resources, which puts a strain on many local and statewide provided support services.

Sadly, it is children who are the largest subgroup of casualties of housing instability and the mental and physical toll it can take on their health and education is insurmountable.

Some important facts on rent stabilization:

- Rent stabilization exists and works!
  - According to the Urban Institute, over 180 jurisdictions have some form of rent stabilization. All of those places are still in existence - rent stabilization hasn't destroyed any of them, despite the claims of the real estate lobby who want to ensure that they can raise rents as much as possible.
- Rent stabilization doesn't impact housing development or housing quality
  - We need more housing supply, and we know that takes hundreds of thousands of dollars and years to plan for and construct. In the meantime, we need to rent stabilization and good cause protections to keep people in our communities, so that they can access that new housing when it's finally built.
  - Rent stabilization doesn't impact development in the long-run - this is a myth perpetuated by associations who have a financial interest in keeping rents unregulated.
    - A study done by UC Berkeley found that between 2007 and 2013, the cities in the Bay Area that had rent stabilization policies built more housing per capita than cities without it - proving that much larger factors, such as zoning, have a greater influence on what is built.
    - In New Jersey, where over 100 cities have rent stabilization, a study that compared cities with and without rent stabilization found that there was no significant relationship between rent stabilization and new housing construction.
  - The claim that rent stabilization impacts housing quality is false. Maintenance has always been an issue for renters long before this policy and will continue to be one that needs to be addressed with other complementary policies. What I do know is that having good cause and rent stabilization

protections will mean that I can ask for repairs with the safety and security of knowing that my landlord can't displace me (by increasing my rent or evicting me) for asking. Knowing that I'm protected means that I can advocate for my right to safe and habitable housing without fear of retaliation.

- Wages have not kept up with rental prices, and renters can't afford these steep increases
  - Approximately 52% of CT renters are already cost-burdened, meaning they spend more than 30% of their gross monthly income on rent.
  - Black communities, Seniors, and people with disabilities are disproportionately housing cost burdened.
  - Over the last two decades through the five-year period of 2017-2021, median rents increased in Connecticut nearly twice as much as the income of renters.
  - If adjusted for inflation, the median household income of renters actually *dropped* by 13%.
  - Median rent has spiked further in the state over the last two years, increasing by 20%.
- Skyrocketing rent is driving homelessness
  - Skyrocketing rent is driving homelessness, increasing evictions—now higher than pre-pandemic averages—and displacing families from their homes and long-term
  - The Government Accountability Office found that a median rent increase of \$100/month was associated with a 9% increase in homelessness
  - Once median rent surpasses 32% of median income—once a community passes the “cost-burdened” threshold as defined by HUD—homelessness increases faster
- CT residents want a rent cap
  - Recent polling data indicates 72% of CT voters support a 2.5% annual cap on rent increases.

I strongly support a rent cap, but SB 4 would be stronger with the following changes:

- The cap should be lower—I suggest 2.5 or 3%. This tracks pre-pandemic average rent increases and would be affordable and predictable to tenants.
- It should cover apartments in between tenants so landlords can't push out tenants to increase the rent.
- It should expand good cause eviction protections to cover all tenants so they have greater stability in their homes.

Sincerely,  
Annie Stutzman  
New Haven, CT